RESTORATION REVIEW

NO ADMITTANCE!

The Party Spirit! That vanity of men which would assume a papal prerogative to "bind" and "loose"; which would disown the soul bought by the blood of Jesus; which would drive out the son from the Father's house; which would place the flaming sword at the gate of Paradise. How long can the Party Spirit reign before the love of Christ prevails?

See "The Party Image and the Divine Image," page 183.

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WHERE KENNEDY WAS SLAIN

Already since that fateful day of November 22, 1963, I have passed the site of the assassination a hundred times. The scene is a part of home to me, and it has been nearly all my life. I remember when they built those underpasses through which the presidential party was to have passed. And I have many times had the same feeling that Jackie Kennedy said she anticipated: “It will be cool in the tunnel,” even though I have long since become better adjusted to Texas heat.

The site of the tragedy is but a stone’s throw from the postal terminal where I mailed *Bible Talk* for five long years. And that little journal, the predecessor to this one, is one thought that would often come to mind when I passed what we Dallasites call “the triple underpass.” I would think about how a little paper like that could arouse so much thought and reaction --- what a furor it stirred up! But I don’t think about *Bible Talk* anymore when I drive through the triple underpass. My mind is upon that fantastic event that transpired there. Over and over I say to myself as I look at the scene once more: How could it have happened --- and *here* of all places?

Still as I fancy in my mind’s eye the movement of the presidential limousine, which I can spot exactly in the street by way of the photographs, and then look at Oswald’s perch up in that old building where I once applied for a job when a teenager, which is *so* far away for anyone to be shooting with any expectation of hitting his mark, especially a moving mark, I simply cannot believe it. That a shipping clerk in a warehouse could take his rifle to work with him one morning, wait at an open window for the president of the United States to drive by, and then shoot him dead, is still incredible to me. I have to accept as fact that which is too fantastic for me to believe. When I read in the press that Europeans are skeptical about it being that simple, I sympathize with them completely. And the Jack Ruby part of the story is even more fantastic, for it is true that one just doesn’t walk into a major police station. and shoot the world’s most famous criminal. I am like the Europeans, for I don’t believe it either!

And there's Jack Ruby in the County Jail, just across the street from the assassination site, where I have called on prisoners through the years. Though I drive by all this nearly every time I go to Dallas, I still shake my head in disbelief. The most amazing tragedy in American history took place here --- *here* in my home town, *right here!* It is something like having bloodstains embedded on the front steps of your home, always there to remind you as you go in and out. Mystery has a way of frustrating us.

A strange aspect of November 22 in my life was a conversation that took place at the faculty table in the dining room at Texas Woman's University, minutes before the tragedy struck. One professor had just heard the president's speech in Fort Worth over the radio, and he was explaining how unimpressed he was. Another professor, who knew something about the precautions that were being taken in feeding the president, told us how the chef in Dallas set aside the choicest steak for him, but that the Secret Service instructed him to set aside *twelve* steaks for the president, and then when the time comes to make preparation, select one of them at random, as a safeguard against attempted poisoning of the president.

Then one of the professors took off on something she had read about how Kennedy was due to be assassinated due to the year in which he had been elected, which left me very much unimpressed. There was then an expression of uneasiness about Kennedy being in Dallas where something *could* happen to him. I recall one professor saying, "Well, if he has to be assassinated, don't let it be in Dallas!" At that very moment Oswald must have had the president of the United States in his telescopic sight!

I walked out of the dining room back to my office where I had an appointment with one of my students. In a little while the student was in my outer office with a transistor radio, which I casually noticed was doing a lot of cutting up, even for a presidential visit, which I assumed it was covering. I opened the door and invited her in, asking her why there was so much excitement. She stunned me with "President Kennedy has just been assassinated in Dallas." She said it quietly and reverently.

When I leave downtown Dallas, drive past the site of the tragedy, and on through what Jackie Kennedy called "the tunnel" onto the freeway that goes to Denton, and as I pass the *Mart* where the president would have eaten one of those twelve steaks the chef cautiously set aside for him, I invariably think about all of it all over again.

"Come now, you who say, 'Today, or tomorrow, we will go into this city, and we will spend a year there, and we will trade and make a profit.' People like you do not know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life like? You are like a mist which appears for a little time, and' then disappears." (Jas. 4)

November 22 was an auspicious day for John F. Kennedy. He had health, youth, and vigor; he had a beautiful wife and lovely children. He was the president of the United States. His future could not have been more promising. He was once asked what he would

do after his eight years in the White House. His reply was that he had not yet decided, but that he would still be too young to retire. This is the man that left Washington one day in the fulness of earthly glory, but who returned the next day as a corpse in a box, his head half shot off.

It is difficult for *us* to see that each day of our lives is just as uncertain as November 22 was to John F. Kennedy. How could one be more secure than to have the Secret Service and the FBI guarding him, even to the point of standing over cooks when they prepare your food. Still there could be no certainty. "People like you do not know what will happen tomorrow."

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Pro. 27: 1). The Stoics, who could probably philosophize about things like the Kennedy tragedy better than most Christians, taught: "How foolish it is for a man to make plans for his life, when not even tomorrow is in his control." Socrates also talked more like a Christian than many of us do when he rebuked one of his disciples who had said, "I will do so if you wish, Socrates:' The old master said to him: "Alcibiades, that is not the way to talk. And how ought you to speak? You ought to say, 'If *God* so wishes.'"

It may take cruel reminders to make us realize that the future is not in our hands. God is the Ruler of the universe, the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords. The future is His just as the present and the past are His. "In Him we live and move and have our being." We may have plans for the future, but they may not be what God plans for us. We must ever be of that disposition that says, "If the Lord wills, we shall live, and we shall do this or that."

One of the inconsistencies of the tragedy in Dallas is that of all the interpretations that were made by this so-called Christian nation of what had happened, there was no *theological* interpretation given, none that I heard at least.

"He was not, for God took him" is a sober reminder from the Bible that God rules in the affairs of men, that He is active in the struggle between nations, and that He is the author of history.

ON WHAT CHURCH TO LOVE MOST

I have such regard for Prof. W. E. Garrison, the venerable patriarch of the Disciples of Christ, that I read anything he writes with great respect, and it is with reluctance that I question any of his conclusions. There is one point, however, in one of his recent pronouncements that I would like to question, believing that it may prove provocative to our readers.

In an address before 1,475 ministers of the Disciples of Christ at their recent International Convention, the professor spoke of his own spiritual birth and long years of experience among the Disciples. He identified himself with "the mainline of Disciple

principles and traditions," and said that he felt himself bound "to this particular fellowship of the faithful."

Then he added: "This is not sectarianism. It is not that we love other Christians less, but that we love our own family of faith more. In the words of Charlie Weaver, 'these are my people.'"

While it may appear innocuous enough for "the grand old man of the party" to speak to his own people in such sentimental terms, I fear that it reflects a basic fallacy that is too much with us --- the *us* being all groups of discipledom. Dr. Garrison refers to the Disciples as "this particular fellowship of the faithful." Is there more than one fellowship in Christ? Does not *the fellowship* include all Christians? "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1: 9). And is any denomination "a fellowship" within the larger fellowship? "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

My own affiliation is with what we call the "Church of Christ," but I think I err if I view this as a particular fellowship, for my fellowship is not with any denomination, but with the Father and the Son. If any of my "Church of Christ" associates happen to be saints of God, and surely many of them must be, then we are together in fellowship with Christ, and consequently with each other. And if Prof. Garrison is *in Christ*, he is in the fellowship with Christ. This makes us brothers together, not in different fellowships, but in the only fellowship there is --- Christ!

I do not intend to be quarreling with the venerable Disciple historian merely about words, for my objection goes deeper than phraseology.

He says, "This is not sectarianism. It is not that we love other Christians less, but that we love our own family of faith more." It just may be that this is sectarianism, and that most of us are guilty. Why should I love the "Church of Christ" or the "Disciples of Christ" more than the Baptist Church or the Episcopalian Church? If I believed, of course, that one of these churches is the one and only church, the one for which Christ died, while all the others are pagan, it would be consistent to love it just as Christ loved that church. But if I believe that the body of Christ is not to be identified with any particular group, but is rather scattered amongst them all, then my feelings will be different.

I find it difficult to muster much love for *any* denomination. If I know my heart, I love *all* the people that make up these churches, and I can claim a special love for all those who are Christians indeed, wherever they may be found.

If the man who truly loves Jesus happens to be a Baptist, I love him no less than a "Church of Christ" member that truly loves Jesus. They are both my brothers in the same way and the same degree. I have no half-brothers in Christ.

I cannot love a man simply because he is identified with the "Church of Christ" or the "Christian Church," except as I would love any man. If he is indeed a child of God, then he is my brother, and I love him as I do all my brothers in Christ, whether he worships beside me or not.

So I must dissent from Prof. Garrison when he loves "Disciples of Christ" more than other Christians. Why should he, if it be not in some way related to denominational pride? I can understand how we can love one Christian more than another, as Jesus did John, but this would not be because one is in "my church" and the Other is not. I might love a man more because of the many experiences we have had together, the toils and sufferings we have shared, and the mutual joys that are ours, but such a man *might* be an Episcopalian or a Methodist. I love him more, not because of the church he grew up in, but because of the closeness we share together in Christ.

When the Bible says, "Love the brotherhood" (1 Pet. 2: 17) I cannot see that it is speaking of the "Church of Christ" or the "Disciples of Christ," but of all those who are in Christ Jesus. This idea of having splintered brotherhoods, one of which we love more than others, does not appear to me to be true to the spirit of Christianity.

PAUL AND THE COMPUTER

Those who have concerned themselves with problems of textural criticism are aware that there is a question as to whether Paul wrote *Ephesians, First and Second Timothy,* and *Titus.* I recall a paper I did at Harvard in which there were several quotations from what are called "the pastoral epistles," which were attributed without question to the apostle Paul. My professor wrote in the margin: "Many scholars would be offended at your assigning these letters to Paul." As I recall my days at Harvard it seems that I was about the only one in my class that dared to suggest that Paul wrote these books.

It appears that critical study of the New Testament scriptures has about reached the place where it is willing to question the assumptions of yesteryear. Though scholarship has long assumed, with some good reasons of course, that Paul could not have been the author of these letters, it is now reconsidering. In a recent issue of *Expository Times*, published in Edinburgh, Scotland, Prof. A. M. Hunter of Aberdeen, in a survey of New Testament studies over the past quarter of a century, has a few things to say about Paul's letters and the scholars. As to whether Paul wrote *Ephesians* or the pastoral epistles, the Scot assures us that scholarship has not been able to reach unanimity over the past twenty-five years. The "liberals" at the big universities are going to have to be less sure than they were when I was in graduate school, for they then made one feel odd if he took the traditional position. Prof. Hunter concedes that the scholars are by no means agreed on this. To be sure, there are top-flight scholars who defend Paul's authorship of these letters.

During the past year or so there has been a sensational development in this area of study. A minister of the Church of Scotland has taken the problem of Pauline authorship to the computer. After feeding his machine the pertinent information, the results showed that of the thirteen epistles attributed to Paul in the New Testament he was the true author of but five of them: *Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians,* and *Philemon.* May we assume that our electronic age has at last determined the authorship of these books? Prof. Hunter, who tells about this in his survey, hardly thinks so. Computers have their place, the prof admits, but it all depends on what kind of information is fed into them as to the answers they'll give.

The professor advises. his fellow Scotsman to test his computer on none other that the old Scot bard, Bobby Burns. "We suggest to Mr. Morton as a Scot that he try *his* computers on, say, *Tam O'Shanter* and *The Cotter's Saturday Night* to discover which of them (if either) was written by Burns."

This computer idea may prove helpful in other areas of Paul's life and work. If Paul lived in our time, which church would he choose? (One writer was sure he knew the answer to *this* one, while I'm sure I don't) Was Paul more of a Greek than he was a Jew? Was he the minister of a church after the likeness of the modern pastor, some of whom (especially among us) are sure they are doing it "just like Paul did"? And what would be his reaction to some of our efforts for more fellowship and brotherhood? Then there are the more crucial issues of the purpose and destiny of humanity, the existence of so much evil and the problem of freedom.

Or are the crucial issues such ones as congregational cooperation, orphanages, premillenialism, open membership, Sunday School, and how the Lord's Supper is to be served?

Shall we follow the enterprising Scot and take all these questions to the computer? It might not be a bad idea, for we would all surely get the answers we are looking for. In one respect a computer is like the Bible: *it has a way of saying what we want it to say!*

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THE PARTY IMAGE AND THE DIVINE IMAGE

"Thou shalt love the party" is not a divine imperative, but it may better describe the mind of the party-man than does the injunction to love one's neighbor as oneself. Where one's treasure is, there his heart is also. He believes in the party; he trusts in the party. He has helped to build it; it is partly his creation. He has so identified himself with it that a reproach against the party is taken as a personal attack against himself. The love he has for it is a kind of self-love, inspired by self-interest.

Moreover, the party-man looks to his party for approbation-and perhaps for *cash.* He becomes dependent upon it, if not for sustenance, certainly for moral support and a feeling of security. He comes to love it for reasons not too different from why a child loves a parent. The parent provides protection, security, sustenance, well-being, a sense of belonging-all that might be called home and love. The child in turn shows loyalty to the parent and home, even to the point sometimes of being indifferent to truth and justice.

This reference to the child and parent as a possible analogy to a man and his party reminds me of a problem that came up in one of my ethics classes. Suppose two men are trapped in a burning building, one of whom is an important nuclear physicist who is engaged in momentous atoms-for-peace projects and the other is an old man who has lived out most of his rather mediocre years. The old man, however, is *your* father. Which would you save?

My girls at Texas Woman's University have difficulty with that one, being the sensitive creatures that they are. I explain to them that there is an important difference between "Which *would* you save?" and "Which *should* you save?" We usually agree that most of us *would* save our parent, though we *should* save the man who can be more productive for the good of the world. Blood is thicker than ethics!

The party-man is in this kind of moral predicament. If it is *his* party that is in the burning building, he must save it, regardless of the significance of the alternative, be it honor, principle, truth, integrity, or benevolence. We cannot help but be sympathetic with the person that drags his old dad from the burning inferno, leaving the scientist behind, and saying, "Never mind about scientific progress, *this* man is my father!" Morally speaking, he would be wrong, perhaps very wrong, but we would feel for him in his predicament. So it is with the party-man. Really he has no choice but to be loyal to the party, regardless of the circumstance, provided he is to remain a party-man. Even as he pulls his party to safety from the wreckage, leaving perhaps his own personal integrity behind, we ought to be able to understand, and even to show compassion. He has saved what he loves most. Could he be expected to do otherwise?

The party-man may not realize it, but an important attraction to the party is the anonymity it provides him. He does not have to be "an individual," if I may use a term that was so meaningful to Soren Kierkegaard, who referred to "the crowd" somewhat like I am using the term *party.* The Danish philosopher described those who were unwilling to achieve "the authentic self" as seeking the plaudits of the crowd and as hiding themselves in the anonymity that the crowd always provides. Kierkegaard, hailed as the founder of Existentialism (a philosophy worth studying), conceded that the crowd offers honor, position, security, and approbation, but it always denies one of being "an individual." Because of this he often said, even to the point of being tedious, "The crowd is untruth . . . The crowd is untruth . . . The crowd is untruth."

We too would insist that the party-man can never have *truth,* used in the highest sense of self-authenticity before God. Oh, the party-man may be *right* about a lot of things. In terms of dogma and orthodoxy he may be as right as rain. The crowd often is. But when one surrenders his own uniqueness, gives up the right to grow and to think according to his own capacity, and makes himself listen to the crowd before he acts, he is no longer a free man. This is the greatest untruth of all. When one loses his individuality in what Kierkegaard calls "the noise of the crowd" he is to be pitied. Emerson put it this way: "God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please, for you can never have both."

The party makes possible this anonymity in which self-deception can hide. The party is identified with "the truth," and the party-man in turn is identified with the parry. It is not a matter of one experiencing the truth in his own personal confrontation with God, but rather that he is identified with the right group. The party has its own special vocabulary that a logician might dub as equivocation, but to the initiated it is full of meaning as well as full of comfort. In the party of my own background the vocabulary was (and still is) highly important, so much so that if you disturb the vocabulary you disturb the security. "Faithful" did not mean a heart full of trust in the Lord; it meant fidelity to the doctrines of the party. "The Lord's people" did not refer to all those who are saints of God; quite frankly it meant us — just us! "Sound" and "loyal" and "the church" and "obeying the gospel" and "the truth" were all *slanted* so as to have certain restricted meanings.

One man in particular comes to mind as I cite these instances of vocabulary, for the party withdrew fellowship (?) from him, and in making public announcement of this used such language as I have referred to. Though this man has more faith in Jesus than most Christians I know, he is now labeled as "unfaithful" by the party. He has "forsaken the church" only because his spiritual starvation led him from the church of his youth to a search for the reality of Christ. He has now rejected "the truth" even though he is diligently seeking it, for the party makes *truth* (what a precious word!) mean whatever the party believes and practices.

In a recent conversation with this brother, who is a business man that almost lets his zeal for the Lord interfere with his work, I asked him what his status with his congregation would have been had he become so busy in this world's affairs that he would barely have time to hurry to church on Sundays and Wednesday nights. Though so busy chasing the dollar that he could hardly be thought of as a devoted disciple, still he would be "loyal" to the party's external marks of orthodoxy. What then would have been his fate? He readily agreed that he was fully accepted as "faithful" and "loyal to the truth" so long as he went along with the crowd, even though his life was not truly dedicated to the Christ. Now that the Christ is precious to him, he went on to explain, and he has begun a search for deeper

understanding of Christianity regardless of party religion, he has been kicked out of the church!

In the bull of excommunication, which appeared in *Firm Foundation*, one of the reasons given for the withdrawal was "the serious doctrinal heresy" of denying "the undenominational character and unity of the Church of Christ." This means that the man and his wife were rejected (the report refers to them as "former brethren") because they did not believe that one party within Christendom, which calls itself "the Church of Christ," is the one and only true church. You have to believe that it is "undenominational" and that it is "united" because the crowd says so. Never mind about your intelligence or your individuality or your sense of honor and decency, for you must believe it the way the party does.

Yet it is just this kind of exclusiveness that gives strength to party religion and makes anonymity a reality. Suppose you *can* believe that you are right while all the others are wrong, and that your group only has *the truth.* Infallibility, which is what this is, is a most comforting doctrine to a certain type mind. He is right because he is properly identified. He doesn't have to worry about thinking things through and figuring things out. He has already arrived. This provides a deep sense of security and makes unnecessary a personal striving for reality. Blessed anonymity! I am reminded of what a dean at Southern Methodist University once said about the church referred to above: "You'll have to hand it to those folks. They *know* they've got the truth." What interested me the most was that the dean said it as if he envied them!

This is the party image. The dean got it right when he said that *they* know they have the truth. Together they know they are right. If anyone doubts, he lacks that much being a true party-man. If one really *belongs* to the party, there is no doubt. He is not quite like the tough-minded Texan who said, "I am a Democrat, but I don't *belong* to the Democrat party." When one *belongs* to the party, then the party is right and cannot be wrong. He accepts the doctrine of infallibility whether he admits it or not.

One serious problem in the congregation at Corinth (1 Cor. 1) was that many of them *belonged* to parties. "Each of you is saying, 'I belong to Paul', 'I belong to Apollos', 'I belong to Cephas', 'I belong to Christ'. Has Christ been partitioned up?"

William Barclay thinks that perhaps the "I belong to Christ" group was as much a party as the others. His comment is interesting: "If this does describe a party, they must have been a small and rigid and self-righteous sect who claimed that they were the only true Christians in Corinth. Their real fault was not in saying that they belonged to Christ, but in acting as if Christ belonged to them. It may well describe a little intolerant, self-righteous group."

If one does truly *belong* he has access to the party machinery, its institutions and its organs, and he can count on their protecting him so long as he is a loyal son. There can, of course, be some superficial criticism of the party, of the 'What we need to do is . . . " variety, but there can be absolutely no questioning of the basic assumptions of the party, such as its "undenominational character." There is even the occasional minister who "pours it on" as he speaks against some of the practices of the party, and there are those who admire him for it, but still he must remain basically loyal to the party if he is to be tolerated.

A religious party is like a political party in that the one who expects to succeed must play the game according to the rules. He must learn what to say and how to say it, whom to know and how to treat them. Though they may not be clearly defined, there are rules one is to follow if he wants a place on college lectureships or if he wants to be invited as a guest speaker at the larger, more influential churches. One rather obvious rule is to support the big wheels, who in turn will move you along, commensurate of course with your ability. The big wheels recognize ability only in those who support their own projects. They know how to say the right word to the churches. It is a subtle thing. Wisdom has a part to play.

Perhaps this is more evident when one views it negatively,' by watching what happens to him who is not a good party-man. Regardless of his ability or education, or even his piety, he may be ignored. The editors are not interested in what he writes; he isn't invited to the colleges; he serves on no boards or committees. The word is passed along that he is "liberal" or some such tag-all of course in the interest of protecting "the church" against "heresy."

This is the way the party treats the quiet heretic. If he is the louder type, the kind that writes critical letters or starts journals, the treatment is different. The party will discover that he was, after all, *always* that way, even when he was in college. Only when he becomes a non-party man do his classmates in college recall how radical or heretical he was even then. His integrity will be questioned and his motives suspected. He will be accused of having an ax to grind, of having to have some hobby to ride. There can be no dedicated, sincere reformers within the circle of partydom, for a party can never see itself as in need of reformation — not *really* that is.

When a big wheel or almost a big wheel jumps the traces and bolts the party, the party is terribly embarrassed, if not infuriated, and it hardly knows how to react since it happens so seldom. In one case that I recall the whole thing was blamed on the man's wife!

It is the young man that the party is adept at handling. If he fails to cultivate the party image, he simply will not advance. The men at the top in any party, religious, or political, are not necessarily the ablest, and certainly are not the most dedicated. They are the best party-men. They know how to pull the strings and get the votes. Nothing can be so vicious

as a party-man whose party standing is threatened. He will "kill" — not literally of course since that isn't necessary — to protect his party and his position in the party. A young man who dares to be "an individual" will simply be destroyed. "There will not be a church in the brotherhood that will have him," and I've heard the party say it precisely that way many times.

The man who sincerely desires to be "an individual" in the party is to be both admired and pitied. He must learn the fine art of walking on egg shells. He never really does well in the party because even when he tries to say what he is supposed to say it doesn't sound quite right. He knows better, so he can't be enthusiastic. He is too honest to be a good party man, and he is not good enough at rationalization to make himself feel right. One makes a better party-man if he is a bit unscrupulous. His most serious problem is that he wants to do good and to serve productively in the kingdom of God. He wants to preach and to be used; he wants to be accepted and to be respected. And what happens to him if he doesn't go along with the party? Where will he preach? What can he do? He is *out!* He can see what happens to others who talk too much and ask too many questions, and he doesn't want it to happen to him. His position is most understandable — as is the position of the fellow who pulled his father from the burning building, leaving the scientist behind.

At this point we are at the taproot of the evil of partyism. The welfare of the party has precedence over the dignity of the individual. Like Pharisaism, it assumes that man is made for the Sabbath, instead of the Sabbath for man. The party must sacrifice the authenticity of man for the glory of its own institutions. The evil of partyism is that it has a *herd* mind, which makes it impossible for it to encourage free thought and discussion. If the free voice of an individual is heard above the din of the crowd, it must be silenced.

Such is the party image.

The divine image is as different as light is from darkness. It is only the divine nature that can free one from the party image: "By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4).

The party image enslaves, the divine image frees. "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8: 36). The party image must conform to the party, while the divine image conforms to the likeness of Christ: "He who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 John 2:6). Such a man imitates God rather than the party image: "Be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph. 5: 1). "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philip. 3: 10).

The party image always finds its pattern in its own dogmas and traditions, but the divine linage finds its pattern in the Christ: "I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13: 15). "To this end you have been called, because

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 2 : 21). The party is formed in its own image, the man in Christ after His image: "Put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the linage of its creator" (Col. 3: 10) . The party image is necessarily party-minded, while the individual in Christ is Christ-minded: "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus" (Philip. 2: 5). "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (Gal. 4:19)

He who wants to be a free man in Christ, but finds himself enmeshed in partyism, has to make a decision. He cannot have the advantages that come from following the crowd and at the same time enjoy the bounties of being a free man. As to how *hard* such a decision is depends upon how dear the party is to him. If freedom is so precious to him that he seeks it at any price, then the decision is not difficult.

Once a man declares his independence the party linage is no longer a frame of reference. Once he achieves self-authenticity in Christ the future is wholly in the hands of God, to whom he looks for sustenance and guidance. — *the Editor*

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MISCELLANY

Robert R. Meyers

One has many adventures of the mind which do not lend themselves to being shaped into full-fledged essays. A provocative visit to some religious meeting, bits and pieces culled from the week's reading, brief talks with people who care about man's ties with God — these may lack the substance needed for long articles, yet hold value for readers who like having their minds teased on a variety of subjects.

The word "miscellany" is as adequate as any other for such a collection. I considered the word "leftovers" as a humbler title, but it seemed a bit more whimsical than some of the material warranted. For I am not merely salvaging the odds and ends that clutter the mind and bulge the drawers of the desk. Anyone who thinks almost constantly upon a subject grows curious about many matters which are peripheral to its main issues, but which he knows will interest readers with the same preoccupations. For such readers, the following grab-bag of observations and reported experiences is presented. It invites nothing more than browsing. Those hot-eyed seekers of the eternally profound should pass on at once to greener pastures.

Business Men Reprimanded

One of the more intriguing Texas Church of Christ bulletins which came my way recently printed a rather unusual plea under the heading: CATHOLIC CALENDAR. It points all men of the party to a clear and present danger now facing the church. I have corrected a couple of grammatical errors, because these are easily made and it ought to be beneath dignity to have fun at the expense of such slips. Otherwise, the paragraph reads as follows:

> I notice that more and more of the calendars being given out by business men are 'Catholic Calendars,' that is, they' are designed for use by Catholic people. These calendars have all Catholic 'fast days' marked with fish. Thus, every Friday and other 'fast' days have a fish in the space for that day to remind Catholics not to eat meat that day, but to eat fish . . . Many Christian and non-Catholic merchants somehow, unintentionally, get these "Catholic Calendars" and never noticing, pass them out to their customers, and many Christian and non-Catholic customers take them home and put them up — still never noticing. Let me suggest that you pay more attention to this and refuse such calendars when they are offered to you, and very courteously explain to the merchant that you are a Christian — not a Catholic, and that you do not care for a calendar designed especially for the Catholic religion.

This alarmed me so that I took another look at my own little desk calendar, and sure enough, I was the owner — all unsuspectingly — of one of those nefarious "Catholic Calendars." The Fridays all had fish symbols, and I found some other days of the week similarly marked. It was clear that I had on my hands "a calendar designed especially for the Catholic religion."

As I leafed through my little piece of propaganda, however, I came upon some disturbing sights. I found that Yom Kippur and the date of Israel's becoming a state were prominently indicated. The conspiracy grew worse! Now I had a Catholic-Jewish calendar on my clean Protestant hands.

Then I discovered a memorial to the day when the Pilgrims landed, to the Monroe Doctrine, and to Veteran's Day. It seemed I had a Patriot's Calendar, as well. But Father's Day and Mother's Day were vividly marked, as was Thanksgiving, so I had to include Domestic Calendar in the maker's scheming. When Woman Suffrage was celebrated, I saw clearly the Feminist conspiracy at work, and my heart sank even more when I came upon the date of the founding of the Republican party. What more, I thought, could I expect, when a successful businessman put this thing out?

I was almost in despair when I came at last to a day marked MARTIN LUTHER'S BIRTHDAY. At last I had a Protestant. Small print, grudgingly, perhaps, but a Protestant none the less. And there was Christmas, which some of us rather enjoy even within the precincts of the Church of Christ movement. I decided I could keep my Catholic-Jewish-Patriot-Domestic-Feminist-Republican-Protestant Calendar.

Then the blow fell cruelly upon me. I saw marked in large capital letters such positively pagan reminiscences as made it clear who was *really* behind this propaganda. There were months named for Janus, for the Roman festival of purification, for Mars, for the goddess of increase Maia, and for such busy Romans as Junius, Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar — none of them Restoration Christians. Since these came only once a month, they disturbed me less than the underhanded way in which the pagans had tried to influence our thinking on *every single day of the week!*

There was the sun's day and the moon's day, those ancient objects of worship which the Old Testament often warns against. And the day of Tiw, god of war among the Anglo-Saxons. And Thor's day, and Woden's day, and Freya's day, that pagan goddess of love. Not to mention Saturn's day.

The Catholic plot pales into insignificance beside all this. The whole thing is a subtle, pernicious pagan plot designed to lure us into relapsing into that ancient pre-Christian unsoundness. My advice to all who hold such calendars is this: return them to the merchant who gave them to you and say, courteously, that you are a Christian, not a pagan, and that you do not care for a calendar obviously designed especially for pagans. It may be that some merchant can dig up an old Quaker calendar for you. They saw this pagan plot long before I did and insisted that the months and the days be designed only by numbers.

The satire is heavy-handed, I admit, but such foolishness in print may deserve it. More seriously I would suggest that one who has no more important Christian involvements than such a warning hints at should restudy the entire Christian movement. The best starting place for one who really worries about the marking of fast days on a calendar might very well be Romans 14, some of which is almost unbelievably relevant to this issue:

> Again, one man thinks some days of more importance than others. Another man considers them all alike. Let every one be definite in his own conviction. If a man specially observes one particular day, he does so 'to God.' The man who eats, eats 'to God,' for he thanks God for the food. The man who fasts also does it 'to God,' for he thanks God for the benefits of fasting . . . Why, then, criticize your brother's actions, why try to make him look small? We shall all be judged one day, not by one another's standards or even our own, but by the standard of Christ.

Who said, among Other things, "When you fast . . . " and who once fasted Himself during a forty-day period of meditation and trial. It happens not to be a part of my religious tradition to fast, but I shall not make fun of those who do so in the belief that they thus strengthen themselves spiritually. If some who fast abuse the idea, it is doubtless no worse than some other abuses I see within my own religious community.

It seems to me that we are still petulant children when we disseminate and approve such trivia. I was given my "Catholic Calendar" by one of the finest Christian elders and businessman I have ever known. I am sure he thought it no crime against humanity or religion to indicate that on Fridays his Catholic customers fast. Neither do I.

Beware The Pattern

Sometimes a Christian minister falls into a pattern of performance, so that he conducts himself always the same even when circumstances are different. What worked well with one person may be an utter failure with another, but if he is victimized by his pattern approach, he may not even notice it. Since every worker in the church is a minister and does what we call "personal work," it seems wise to illustrate how the rate performance can fail.

Recently I had a letter from an elderly lady whose sensitivity and intelligence go rather beyond the usual. A world traveler and onetime European magazine editor, she wrote the following indictment of the imperceptive approach:

> Sometime ago I had a call from the new minister from the church down the street. His wife brought him and while I appreciated the gesture, frankly I was unimpressed. He prayed with me and read verses from the Bible to me, all of which should have given me an uplift and a measure of gratitude. However, I was embarrassed!
>
> To what depths I must have fallen to allow such a reaction to take possession of me! Strangely enough, I felt that his wife was watching me very closely as though she sensed the effort I was making to be polite and friendly. Be that as it may, I found the assignment tough. The whole thing was so different from the easy companionship of other days when (she names two other Church of Christ evangelists) held out their hands to me.

This lady is eighty-five years old. She has read hundreds of the best books and has written exceptionally fine short stories and magazine articles. Her letter suggests that she dislikes being treated as an *object* of ministerial concern. She wanted to be, instead, a *person.* The Bible reading and the praying were so managed that they seemed "pattern" activities to her. They might profitably have been put off until the minister got to know this lady as an individual. His pattern called for certain things to be done automatically on such a visit, but she clearly wishes he had waited until he was *asked* to read and pray — until he had offered friendship and sought to know a person.

When The Church Stood Firm

A Mennonite minister from Illinois read someone's comment about the "outdated and archaic beliefs and customs" of Christianity and decided to make a response. In his defense, he cited the appraisal once made of the church by Albert Einstein. It is so glorious a tribute to the church, when the church is brave, that I wish to make it available for all readers of this magazine.

Einstein said:

> Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came to Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities were immediately silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers, but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks. Then I looked to the individual writers, but they too were mute.
>
> Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth. I never had any great interest in the Church before. But now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.

How proud every Christian ought to be at such a witness from the great scientist. We have no Nazi movement to combat now, but challenges of social injustice and racial prejudice still demand brave responses from the Church. The children of God are being maimed even now by the hostile, the greedy, and the apathetic. It ought to be a major concern for every Christian in every denomination to ask constantly what his group is doing (not just saying) about the great social, economic and moral issues of our time. No man of depth will ever get excited about a church which meets occasionally for safe services, but never dirties its hands or bloodies its brow in the ceaseless battle for human rights.

"We Found The True Church"

Ever so often one of the Church of Christ journals reports the discovery of a "true church" meeting in the heart of some wild and primitive region. With pardonable elation the report will say that with no help at all from American Christians (members of The Church of Christ) these natives took their Bibles, obeyed the proper entrance rites, and found the original order of worship.

Such a group was reported upon in the *Christian Chronicle* some months ago. Located in the interior of Ethiopia, these folk were said to be "using only the Bible as a guide." A missionary with the proper credentials investigated them and sent in his account, from which I shall quote below.

He said that the translator, who brought the news about the group, made arrangements for him to meet with two of the 29 congregations in the province. "Previously there had been 480," he explained, "but all except the 29 had been led away by false teachers."

Such a mortality rate is staggering and rather discouraging, but worse is to come. Even the 29 were in trouble, since while using only the New Testament they had nevertheless been observing the Lord's Supper only once each month. "Unquestionably," the missionary assured his readers, "there are practices which must be corrected. I believe they can and will be with proper and adequate teaching."

"The Bible only" is apparently not quite enough, since invariably preachers of the "true church" must go in and correct certain false impressions which these primitive students get. These, in addition to their fuzziness about how often to observe the Supper, were described as only "*generally* free from denominational concepts." One would like very much to know what other denominational concepts the natives picked up as they read "only the Bible," but the reporter chooses not to say.

I suppose others will react quite differently, but I am saddened by the thought that these good Ethiopian people probably had not learned yet that they were the only Christians and had still to discover that all other religionists are in grievous error and hopelessly lost. They will find this out soon, of course, in the name of that party which wants to preserve the last 29 congregations from error. Whether they will then be nearer to the Lord, or farther away, is a matter about which men are likely to differ. With 29 congregations still left, there will be at least one each for all the various factions within our religious group. Soon, instead of squabbling with other denominations whom they have learned are all lost, they can settle down to quarreling among themselves in civil strife. One surely may be pardoned for wishing they might have been left with their Bibles to work out their own salvation.

Back From Russia

Dr. Lawrence Shepoiser, superintendent of the Wichita, Kansas public schools, returned recently from a month-long tour of the Soviet Union. In a full-page newspaper story, he tried to evaluate the Russian way of life and the Russian schools. He appeared to be trying to be objective about it, and this strikes me as risky business in modern America.

Readers of this journal will be stimulated by some comments he made on Russian ethics. He said that much in Russian theory and practice is paradoxical, that atheism is taught and religion frowned upon as ignorant, but that the people are honest and moral. It takes a man of profound naivete or profound courage to say something like that in Kansas, the state where Madelyn Murray wanted to set up her center for the promotion of atheism.

Not only that, but he went on to say that shopkeepers leave their stores for long periods at a time with no fear of anything being stolen, and that the superintendents in his party deliberately left some articles in places that would invite theft in this country. Nothing was stolen. One boy walked five miles to return a camera case 'to one of the superintendents. Said Shepoiser: "I never saw cheating in any classroom. They help each other because they believe in it."

Dr. Shepoiser would have been much more popular around here, with many people, if he had related some juicy tales of how immoral all those dirty Russian atheists are. This would have provided grist for the mill in dozens of pulpits around town. But he refused to do it, and I must suppose that it was because that was simply not the way he saw things.

The thought that an atheist might be moral and honest is shocking to many Christians, but it is true nevertheless. It does the Christian cause no good when its adherents assert, blindly, that all atheists are without moral standards and cannot be trusted. Anyone who knows a few atheists intimately, or has some grasp of history, knows better. But the shallow indictment keeps being made, probably because it frightens the ignorant and comforts the arrogant.

It seems to me that a Christian might legitimately feel sorry for an atheist, since the atheist lacks certain spiritual comforts which the Christian enjoys. But to assume that the inability to believe in our God inevitably turns others into immoral, dishonest and unreliable people is pure nonsense. Dr. Shepoiser is a courageous man to prick this old bubble, and I must confess I admire him.

His comments came just after I had talked to a family in a counseling session and had had occasion to recommend that the family urgently needed a good church life to bind them all together. The husband said, “Well, I can’t have that, because I am an atheist.” He sat there looking at me expectantly, waiting for shock and horror to spread across my face.

I refused to gratify him. I said, “Well, there are a number of people around who feel that way, including some friends and relatives of mine. I must respect any man who has honestly and carefully weighed the arguments for and against the existence of God, and decided against it. I need not agree with his conviction, but I must respect it, and I respect yours. I hope you may have cause to change your mind someday.”

And I thought later, after reading of Dr. Shepoiser’s visit and his views, how wonderful it would be if the Russians rediscovered God one of these days, and if Americans should learn at the same time to pay more attention to the God they claim already to have found.

Earthquakes and Theology

With the Alaskan earthquake still fresh in our minds, it may be interesting to notice that no one has suggested a supernatural origin for the disaster. No one has said, at least not in any reputable media known to me, that God was punishing the Alaskan people for their wicked ways.

Instead, newspapers and journals have printed detailed studies of the natural causes of quakes, complete with fascinating pictures and diagrams. Much is known about stress and strain in the earth’s outer covering and where there is still ignorance, scientists assume that the unknown factors are natural and may yet be understood.

It is easy to forget how recent such approaches to disaster are. As the Jewish people developed their concept of God, they found Him involved directly in all sorts of natural catastrophes. Floods, fires, quakes, storms, plagues of locusts — all these were initiated by God as punishments. When the Jews were hit themselves, they were positive that they had

sinned. When their enemies were hit, they were positive that God was showing whose side He was on.

It was a time when the mysteries of nature were still many and deep. God is represented in the book of *Job* as asking these questions: Do you know when mountain goats bring forth? Do you observe the calving of the hinds? Do you know the gestation period of these animals? In those times, Job could not answer, and his ignorance became a source of awe. In these days, one *can* answer, but his very knowledge may be equally a source of awe. God has not changed, but man's knowledge has expanded enormously and his dominion has increased. Some of the explanations which once increased piety and reverence would now destroy them in many of us.

For example, have you studied the explanations given for the famed Lisbon earthquake of 1755? Catholics were sure that God was punishing Portugal because Protestants were there in some numbers. Protestants were sure that God was showing the world how He felt about the masses of Catholics in the city. Theologians were greatly agitated. Why did this devout and famous city suffer so horribly at the hands of a loving God-with the innocent dying alongside the guilty?

Rousseau and others of his faith declared that this is the best of all possible worlds, so earthquakes must be for the best. It is only the evils of society that are bad. If we were not cooped up in cities, earthquakes would not kill us. It was this kind of glib, shallow optimism that infuriated the French philosopher Voltaire and caused him to write *Candide,* his devastating satire on all such thoughtless comment.

One fascinating argument ran like this: that God meant to shock all of Christendom into penitence by the destruction of some famous and wealthy city. Since He especially favored Portugal, He decided that the Portuguese "for their own good and as a result of the heavenly priority that was their due" should be singled out for the honour of being the first punished, and the most severely punished!

One sees how easily any event may be made to fit into a predetermined pattern. Each philosophy saw itself justified in the Lisbon terror. Theology strained itself memorably in its attempt to fit the disaster into the prevailing theories about God. Yet some good came out of it, because it began a series of inquiries which led ultimately to the belief that quakes were natural rather than supernatural phenomena, and thus were amenable to observation and to explanation by a rational theory. — *876 Spauding, Wichita, Kan.*

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DOES BAPTISM SAVE?

Curtis H. Lydic

Recently we have received a number of comments from readers about the allusions to baptism made in *Restoration Review* articles. These comments have all been of a somewhat critical nature, made by people who feel that we should be careful about making it sound as though baptism has something to do with salvation. One sister writes, “All who have been born again, not of the flesh but of the Spirit, are Christians. The Bible tells us that there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. We are not able to receive the good things of God until we have been born of the Spirit. Baptism is an earthly witness. If water baptism saved a person there would be two baptisms.”

Our experience has taught us that we are often wrong, and we have found it necessary to adjust our views a number of times when we were shown the more perfect way. We are willing to listen to and consider the arguments of our Christian friends who feel that water baptism receives undue emphasis in our teaching, but we feel that it is not enough to be told that we are wrong; we will have to see “the more perfect way.” The sister quoted above speaks of the “birth of the Spirit,” but not of the birth of “the water and the Spirit,” of John 3. She speaks of both the birth of the Spirit and of water baptism, but says that if we were saved by water baptism there would be two baptisms. If she has in mind the “baptism of the Spirit” when she speaks of the new birth, and distinguishes that from water baptism, then it would seem that there are two baptisms anyway, whether water baptism saves or not. What I want to know, if water baptism has nothing to do with salvation, is what to do with all those passages which place emphasis upon it. I don’t believe that members of the Church of Christ are wholly responsible for the fuss about baptism; the apostles made some fuss about it themselves. An example is in Acts 19: 1-7. Why did Paul bother these people about baptism if it has no part in salvation? And, again, what does Paul mean by saying that “we are baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6: 3) ? And why would Peter say, “Baptism . . . now saves you. . . “ (1 Peter 3:21) We of *Restoration Review* strongly recommend that members of the Church of Christ give Baptists and others who hold views different from ours the benefit of every doubt, and not suspect them of being deliberately or carelessly stubborn. Surely we are not out of order to ask the same consideration from our Baptist friends and others who disagree with us about baptism. We are not just trying to be difficult when we maintain that baptism is necessary; but we can see no alternative conclusion in view of the statements made about baptism in the New Testament. We do not wish to rob the concept of Grace of any of its power, and we do not pretend that salvation is made possible by anything but Grace; but we believe that it is possible to conceive of baptism’s being necessary without salvation’s being based upon it. There is a fundamental difference between cause and condition. Grace is the cause, but baptism seems to be one of the conditions, as are love, and faith. What else are we to make of the numerous and elaborate references to it which are to be found in the Word of God?

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